

FIRST CONNECTION

From the Pastor

Independence Day!

On July 2nd, 1776, the Continental Congress voted in favor of independence. On July 4th, 1776, delegates from the 13 colonies adopted the Declaration of Independence, which was a document declaring our independence from the British Empire. Since that time, we have celebrated our independence on July 4th with fireworks, parades, family gatherings, and cookouts. We Americans value freedom. We value our independence and we have fought many wars to keep our freedoms and to help keep people free.



As Christians, we also value freedom and we should work hard to help set people free from sin. In John 8:31-32, Jesus says, “If you hold to my teaching, you are really my disciples. Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.” Then a few verses later Jesus says, “If the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed.” (John 8:36).

In July, we celebrate our freedom from England, but may we celebrate our freedom from sin every day! May we remember and give thanks to Jesus for our freedom. May we work hard to share God’s truth and love with others, so they too can be set free from sin and be “Free Indeed!” Amen.

Blessings,
Pastor Dan

Church Family Focus

Secret Saints Revealed

It was another very interesting year with the Covid-19 students attending more online classes and activities than ever. Some students lived on campus, while others remained home. In both cases, our Secret Saints saw to it that these students knew that their church family was there for them.

I would like to say a very special thanks to the "Secret Saints" who have gone out of their way to show our college students that they are still cared for as they continue to their next stage of life. Five of these young adults received e-mails, cards, and care packages throughout the 2020-21 school year, but most importantly they received encouragement and prayer. You are a true "saint" to these young adults.

Daniel Acker.....Kim Risk
Megan LeschJanet Puzycki
Ben PuzyckiLynda Acker
Sarah PuzyckiConnie Lesch
Emily WestfallJudy Korell

If you are graduating high school and preparing to enter the college world or already in college, you can sign up to receive a secret saint for the 2021-22 school year.

Feel free to pick up a form at the opportunities desk or contact Lynda Acker for more information.

Have a happy and safe summer!

COVID Restrictions



We are following Michigan state regulations in regards to COVID safety and masks.

Masks are not required, however follow any guidelines with which you are comfortable. Also, please keep the comfort levels of those around in mind, in regards to greetings and the like. We want everyone to feel safe and welcomed here!

The Church Calendar
can be found on our website:
www.sjfirstumc.org

Thank You Notes

A big thank you to Dan and the church community during this time. The cards, calls, and support are much appreciated.
Thanks to you all.
~Ed Bagatini

To those of you that have donated to the Blessing Box, you are the true blessings.
Thank you!
~Renee Foote

Thank you to all who send cards.
They are much appreciated. I hope to be back!
~Dorothy Gray



Questions? Comments?

Concerns?

Please feel free to contact the church!

We love hearing from you!

(269) 983-3929

office@sjfirstumc.com

Altar Flowers

Thank you to all those who provided June Altar Flowers.

*Thank
You!*



June 6th—In loving memory of Harold E. & Dorothy M. Brown by request of Kent & Jacqui Winship.

June 13th—To celebrate Nick & Shirley Auringer's 50th wedding anniversary.

June 20th—In celebration of Marilyn & Les Herrman's 25th wedding anniversary.

June 27rd—In loving memory of James Winship by request of Kent & Jacqui Winship.

Look for our openings for 2021!

- Aug. 1;
- Oct. 31;
- Nov. 21, 28.

Cost is \$30.

Call or email the church
to sign up!



Jesus on the Fourth of July

We gather 'round to celebrate
On Independence Day
Pay homage to our country
As the children run and play.

With barbecues and picnics
And fireworks in the air
The flag we own is proudly flown
To show how much we care.

The stars and stripes spell freedom
She waves upon the breeze
While bursts of colors can be seen
Above the towering trees.

This is all quite wonderful
We revel in delight
But God above in divine love
Has brought this day to light.

With just a stroke of liberty
A touch of His great hand
He gave democracy to us
And helped this country stand.

The stripes upon our stately flag
Were touched by His sweet grace
Each star of white that shines so bright
Reflects His loving face.

So as you turn to face the flag
For battles that were fought
Be filled with pride for those who died
And freedoms that were bought.

But don't forget to thank the One
That gives the bright display
The reason why we paint the sky
On Independence Day

Copyright ©
Marilyn Ferguson 2003



Soup Kitchen Update

As summer appears, there is an increase in the need for lunches at the Soup Kitchen. This month, we served 115 people a healthy, to-go meal with southern roots, using Martha Stewart's recipe for black-eyed peas, sausage, and collard greens, along with homemade cornbread, oranges, nuts, and cookies. A scripture quote was added to feed the soul too. Our volunteers were Barb and Ron Petzke, Mark Lester, Elaine Graves, Keith Foote and Darcy Baskin. Goodies were provided by Sue O'Neill, Sue Lea, Tara Gillette, Meryle Merritt, Shirley Johnson, Marilyn Herman, Meredy Roorda, and Mark Lester. Thank you to all those who have helped! Nothing feeds OUR souls more like helping others.

Darcy Baskin, Summer Soup Kitchen Coordinator

Mission Trip

What a great time we had volunteering at the Midwest Mission Distribution Center outside Springfield, Illinois! Featured are our nine missionaries - Will Flaherty, Keith and Renee Foote, Mark and Lynda Acker, Les and Marilyn Herrman, and Ron and Barb Petzke.



One of our projects was preparing bleacher wood to be made into desks by removing chewing gum and checking for metal before filling the holes (where they were bolted to the frame) and then cutting to length. Up to four students can sit at each desk! Interested in learning more about the desk project? Visit www.midwestmission.org/kits-projects-patterns/midwest-mission-desk-shop. We also had two people who worked in the Sewing Machine Shop, cleaning and fixing donated machines that will be put back into service! A working machine provides someone with the opportunity to set up a business. Visit www.midwestmission.org/kits-projects-patterns/midwest-mission-sewing-bike-shopset to learn more.

We also worked on verifying school bags and packing Personal Dignity Kits! On Tuesday, we packed 1,030 Personal Dignity Kits with the help of members from St. Joseph United Methodist Church from Iowa. Each kit included a washcloth, hand towel, bar of soap, razor, toothbrush, shampoo, and deodorant, all folded and packed into a gallon plastic bag and then placed in a bag. These kits are shipped internationally and within the US when needed.

Sound like fun? Watch for more news about serving again in later newsletters! Questions? Contact one of this year's missionaries.

Children and Youth Groups

SPARK Kids Club:

- In-person on Thursdays, July 22nd
- Summer Meeting Dates: TBD

Youth Group (Middle School/High School):

- Sunday evenings, July 11th, 18th, and 25th

Kids' Camp 2021 (formerly VBS):

- Theme: Rocky Railway
- July 26th – 30th
- Available to **ALL** kids in the community!

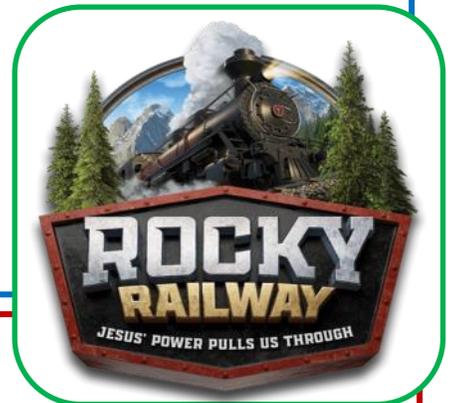
We are “full steam” ahead with our 2021 Kids Camp — Rocky Railway. This year, we will be holding Kids Camp from July 26th-30th in the evenings. If you wish to help, please reach out to Will Flaherty. If you wish to help and Will already reached out to you, please fill out the online survey sent via email.

We are looking forward to your help serving kids in our community.

As always, feel free to reach out with me with any questions or ideas you might have.

Blessings,

Will (willflaherty@sjfirstumc.org)



Capital Improvement Update

WOW! This was the first word that entered my mind after reading an email from Pastor Dan as we returned from the mission trip to Springfield, IL. After that initial reaction, it took me more than a few moments to compose myself. That email let the Council know that donations totaling \$410,000 had been received for the HVAC project. The next action was thanking God and this congregation for their faithfulness and provision!

We had hoped to begin Phase 1 this summer, but with that said, the ROCK Committee is happy to announce that we are able to move forward with the plan to update and replace the whole HVAC system—completing both Phase 1 and 2! After the contract is approved by the Council, dates will be set for the project! A timeline is being reviewed and some fine tuning will be needed, but we now have a plan!

Here are the numbers:

\$233,307.54 in hand May 31

\$410,000.00 new pledges

\$643,307.54 Total

\$ 93,000.00 pledges expected by 2023

\$736,307.54 Total expected by 2023

Special thanks go to everyone who has helped with this project with donations and/or prayers, the Finance Team, including Loree Barnhart and Jake Roorda, chair, who searched hard and long for additional funds, Mark Richards, Council Chair, who negotiated some savings with the new company Tony Egan.

Please continue to pray for this project! We have a long way to go to completion!

Barb Petzke, chair

Young Adult Groups

Monday Night Young Adult Group Schedule:

July 5th: No Small Group

July 12th: Big Tent Revival Service, 7-9 PM (Celebration Cinema)

July 19th: Big Tent Revival Service, 7-9 PM (Celebration Cinema)

July 26th: No Small Group (We encourage you to help with Rocky Railway Kids' Camp)

Y & R Schedule:

July 7th: Big Tent Revival Service, 7-9 PM (Celebration Cinema)

July 14th: Big Tent Revival Service, 7-9 PM (Celebration Cinema)

July 21st: Silver Beach, 7-9 PM

July 28th: Silver Beach, 7-9 PM



Sit and Stitch

We will meet on Thursday, July 1st at 2:30pm in the library. All stitchers are invited regardless of your project. This is the regular meeting of our prayer shawl ministry group, but all stitchers are welcome.

If you have questions please contact Anne Hahn at (269) 429-1452 or Judy Thompson at (269) 325-7641.

If you would like to learn to knit, we can teach you!

Ladies' Luncheon Out

Ladies, please join us for lunch on Thursdays. We'll plan on meeting in the Fellowship Hall. Please bring a sack lunch or pick up lunch on the way. In July, we'll meet on the 8th at 11:30am. Sign up on the Opportunities Desk sheet.

Questions?
Call Barb Petzke (429-5962).
Join us!

Bee Involved

Collate Monthly Newsletters

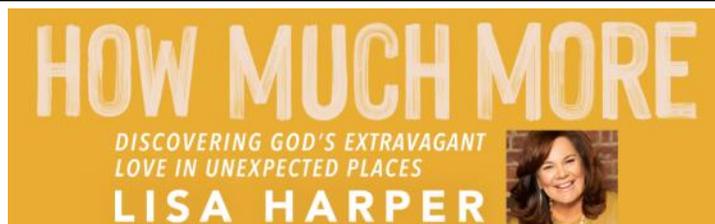
Kid's Camp (formerly VBS)
Volunteers!
Contact Will
(Details on page 5)

Collate Weekly
HomeTouch Send-outs

Attendance Entries

Monday Night Women's Group

We will begin a new study by Lisa Harper on July 12th through August 23rd. Our final meeting will be dinner on August 30th. The study is "HOW MUCH MORE."



"From Beginning to End, the Bible is a Love Story

Maybe your head knows that God is always good, but your heart's not so sure. Or perhaps while reading Scripture, you've wondered if our Creator Redeemer went through a personality change—from strictly enforcing the rules in the Old Testament to loving the outcast in the New!

In this 7-session Bible study, you'll discover divine love in the often overlooked and misunderstood passages. And you'll be delighted to find that Jehovah of the Old Testament is the same redemptive and compassionate God we see through Jesus Christ in the New Testament. He has always been and will always be for us!"

We meet in the library on Monday evenings at 5:45pm.

There's a sign-up sheet on the Opportunities Desk or you may call Judy Thompson at (269) 325-7641 to reserve a workbook by June 30th. The cost of the books is \$16.00. Join us if you are able!

Adult Sunday School

From July 11th through September's end (12 weeks) our Sunday school group will discuss the C. S. Lewis classic "The Screwtape Letters". This study will focus on two or three chapters (letters) each week. Each participant will need to have access to a copy of this work. People may join any week as they are able. The sessions will be conducted remotely (via Zoom) and begin at 11am each Sunday morning.

Contacts for Adult Sunday School & Bible Studies:

Barb Petzke: b_petzke@hotmail.com
(269) 429-5962

Bill Funk: williamfunk@sbcglobal.net

Judy Thompson: (269) 983-7641
1249jmathompson@gmail.com

Lorie Kraus: lorieannkraus@gmail.com



At Home

Trudy Gillespie,
To Grootendorst

**Brookdale
Senior Living,
Greenville, NC**

Joyce Bliss



Homebound
Members

Caretel, St. Joseph

Earl Kugle, Vivian Oberheu

Carmel Village, Clovis, CA

Barbara Kiesel

Crown Pointe, Stevensville

Ed Bagatini

Royalton Manor, St. Joseph

Deloris Dettmann, Barbara Richmond

**Shenandoah Valley Westminster-Canterbury,
Winchester, VA**

Dorothy Gray

Whitcomb Towers, St. Joseph

Noreen Sonnenberg, Dorothy Crow, John Helsley

Woodland Terrace, Bridgman

Dick Copeland

JULY



- Jul. 01 Nolan Worstell
- Jul. 02 Oliver Beckmann
Sheila Nemethy
Julia Service
- Jul. 03 Zachary Keigley
- Jul. 12 Trisha Bonham
- Jul. 13 Miriam Pede
- Jul. 14 Makayla Hatfield
- Jul. 15 Kathie Adams
Russell Hahn
Blair Schadler
Noreen Sonnenberg
- Jul. 17 Jada Holmstrom
Susan O'Neil
- Jul. 18 Lorraine Jespersen
- Jul. 19 Bennett Ryberg
- Jul. 22 Sherie Jeffery
- Jul. 23 Alexander Milnikel
- Jul. 24 Anidale Doyle
- Jul. 25 Barbara Carlson
Michael Dumke
Vili Peluafa
Keith Vanderweide
- Jul. 26 Joel Smiedendorf
- Jul. 27 Esther Kraus
- Jul. 28 Seth Foote
- Jul. 30 Thomas Zabadal
- Jul. 31 Doloris Bittner
Ana Malzon
Pete Schrock



Nick Tomaszewski, John Hoffman, James Dunn, Ward Hine, Robert Argue, Aiden Zemon (Lou Ann Stelter's nephew), Denise Peterson, Maxine Mock, Bob and Joan Cade, and our homebound members.

**Please contact the church when you would like to have your name added/removed from the prayer list.*